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FM AMEMBASSY KYIV
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KYIV 001425

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/06/2017

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SUBJECT: UKRAINE: MILITARY EXERCISE LEGISLATION PASSES, SEA BREEZE ON THE HORIZON

Classified By: Ambassador, reason 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary and Comment: President Yushchenko signed the annual military exercise authorization bill June 6 and Rada (parliament) passage on May 29. Despite support from PM Yanukovych and most of the Party of Regions (the Rada's largest faction), Socialist and Communist party opposition remains, and protests are scheduled for the week of June 11 in Odesa. With the passage of the legislation, Ukraine is now able to host the SEA BREEZE 2007 Exercise scheduled for July 9-22, as well as RAPID TRIDENT 2007, and is taking steps to ensure adequate force protection for participants. Post is working on force protection planning in coordination with the Ukrainian Government and recommends full participation by U.S. forces in the planned activities now that the crucial authorization hurdle has been resolved. End Summary and Comment.

International Military Exercise Bill Signed

12. (U) The Rada (parliament) had initially passed the 2007 annual military exercise authorization bill April 6, but re-endorsed it May 29 with opposition support as a result of the May 27 agreement between Yushchenko, PM Yanukovych, and Speaker Moroz designed to end the political impasse and clear the way for preterm elections September 30. The bill, signed into law by President Yushchenko on June 6, includes a number of bilateral and multilateral military activities, including: Ukrainian-Russian air defense training; Ukrainian-Belgian tactical exercises; RAPID TRIDENT 2007; COMBINED EFFORT 2007; and SEA BREEZE 2007. The delayed approval in 2006 of the authorization bill created legal ambiguity which contributed to the politically-motivated protests in Feodosia in May-June 2006 against SEA BREEZE 2006. The signing of the 2007 authorization allows planners to move forward with SEA BREEZE 2007, scheduled for July 9-22.

SEA BREEZE Supported by Most, but Fringe Opposition Remains

13. (SBU) Mainstream political and defense figures have always supported the exercise agenda, including SEA BREEZE, but some fringe political elements, along with the Communist Party and some Socialists, have remained opposed. Early in 2007, PM Yanukovych endorsed the entire exercise agenda noting its importance to the development of the Ukrainian armed forces; PM adviser Gryshchenko told

Ambassador June 7 that Yanukovych continues to support the exercise and would not do anything to prevent preparations or implementation of SEA BREEZE 07 (note: MPs from Yanukovych's Regions Party participated in the anti-NATO protests against SEA BREEZE 06 in Fedosia. End note). Gryshchenko noted that Nataliya Vitrenko, leader of the extremist Progressive Socialists, would certainly use the exercise to her own political advantage (by organizing protests), but that should not stop the exercise from going forward.

¶4. (SBU) Defense Minister Hrytsenko and Chief of the General Staff Kirichenko told the Ambassador that they strongly supported Ukraine hosting and fully participating in the exercise. Kirichenko has personally traveled to Mykolaev and Odesa on multiple occasions in recent months to discuss about the exercise with local officials (both elected and security services representatives), including actions required to ensure successful conduct of the exercise. Deputy head of the Presidential Administration Oleksandr Chaliy told the Ambassador that President Yushchenko was also fully on board with the exercise and was ready to issue a statement about the importance of the exercise taking place.

Protests Planned

¶5. (U) As predicted by Gryshchenko, Progressive Socialist leader Vitrenko, whose party helped lead the 2006 Feodosia protests and vowed to oppose any NATO-related activity in Ukraine, has already expressed dissent, declaring that she will actively oppose SEA BREEZE 07. Separately, the

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Communist Party and the Union of Orthodox Believers (UOB) announced plans to rally against the exercise in Odesa during the week of June 11. UOB head Valeriy Kaurov indicated that protests in Kyiv would follow unless the exercise format were changed to headquarters maneuvers and NATO vessels were kept away from Odesa.

¶6. (C) Recent pre-planning conferences for SEA BREEZE indicated that the GOU is far better prepared for force protection this year. The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), the Ministry of Interior (MOI), and Ministry of Defense (MOD) all participated in the planning conferences, and a force protection plan has been drafted -- active planning and multi-agency participation not seen at any time during SEA BREEZE 2006

Post Recommendation: SEA BREEZE and RAPID TRIDENT a Go

¶7. (C) Post anticipates that this year's SEA BREEZE exercise will attract a small number of protesters, consistent with past rallies against NATO training exercises. However, the adoption of the legislation and strong support from both the President and the Prime Minister demonstrates Ukraine's desire and intention to proceed with the exercises. Furthermore, we have been pleased with the steps taken by the GOU to increase force protection capability, which Post will monitor and encourage. Post strongly recommends moving forward with planning and execution of the land and maritime phases of SEA BREEZE 2007 as well as exercise RAPID TRIDENT ¶2007.

¶8. (U) Visit Embassy Kyiv's classified website: www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/kiev.
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